

Morse, Niagara, May 2, 1857.

SIR,

I have applied to the Board of Trustees of Queen's College, to be appointed to the vacant Chair of Hebrew, Biblical Criticism, and Church History, and I take the liberty of sending you a copy of my letter of application, and also of the testimonials with which I have accompanied it.

I am yours respectfully,

W. Mowat

Hon. Judge McLean

[COPY]

To the Hon. JOHN HAMILTON, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Queen's College, Kingston.

MANSE, NIAGARA, 27th April, 1857.

SIR,—I beg to offer myself to the Board of Trustees of Queen's College, as a candidate for the vacant Chair of Hebrew, Biblical Criticism, and Church History; and I send herewith, to be laid before the Board, Testimonials which I have received from the Rev. Principal Campbell, the Rev. Dr. Liddell, and the Rev. Mr. Romanes. I studied under Principal Campbell and Dr. Liddell; and Mr. Romanes was a Professor in Queen's College during the whole time—nearly two years—that I was Assistant to Dr. Mathar, in Kingston. All three, therefore, understand, better probably than any of my acquaintances not belonging to the Board, the nature of the duties which will devolve upon the Professor about to be appointed, and they have had ampler opportunities than almost any others, of knowing my character, intellectual, moral, and religious. And the claim which I venture to make to the requisite qualifications for the Professorship, will not, I hope, be thought presumptuous and altogether unfounded, when it is affirmed, in no faint or doubtful terms, by persons so competent to judge of them.

I may add that I have sought testimonials from these gentlemen only. There are others, on the Board, who know me equally well, and who are equally conversant with the requirements of the office; and I should not have hesitated to request testimonials from them had the appointment not been in their own gift.

I was strongly urged by some of my friends to apply also to the Professors whose classes I attended at the University of Edinburgh. And I perceive that both Principal Campbell and Dr. Liddell have taken occasion to state, that they are aware that the Edinburgh Professors entertained a favourable opinion of me. But it is natural for one who is not hardened by experience of this kind, to be averse to apply, for a recommendation of himself, to persons with whom he is not familiarly acquainted; and as I was not on intimate terms with any of the Professors in Edinburgh, I could not overcome my repugnance to solicit them to favour me with the expression of their opinion of me.

With respect to my qualifications for the office, I beg to say, that I gave a good deal of attention to Hebrew, Biblical Criticism, and Church History, especially the two former; when I was a Divinity student and a Probationer, and that during five years of my residence in Niagara, I have been in the habit of spending several hours in the morning of five days in the week, in the study of the Scriptures in the original languages. I say during five years of my residence in Niagara, because during the last year or so, a part of the hours I had previously given to those studies, I have occupied in preparing two promising young men of my own congregation, to enter Queen's College, with a view to the ministry. In my researches into the text, meaning, and literature of the Bible, I have had the advantage of a pretty well furnished library; and besides the principal publications of English Divines on the subject, I have studied the exegetical works of Havermick, Hengstenberg, Olshausen, Ebrard, Tholuck, Billroth, and several others, of the more orthodox German writers. With a somewhat active temperament, vigorous health, and a pastoral charge in which I am peculiarly free from harassing interruptions, I have been able to devote a large portion of my time to these studies, without neglecting, I hope, the direct interests of my people.

I cannot help adding, however, that my present theological attainments, though I trust they would be found even now adequate to the demands of the Professorship, are very limited in comparison with what I believe they would become, if I should obtain that office, for it would then be alike my duty and my privilege, to make the acquisition of that sacred learning which I love, the great business of my life. And as study has never been a task to me, but a delight, no labour would be wanting on my part to accomplish a progress in Biblical and Ecclesiastical learning, which would not only be sufficient to meet the immediate requirements of the Chair, but might serve to reflect some honour on the College and the Church.

But, I am aware, it is not enough, though it is extremely important, to make our divinity students sound and erudite Theologians, and to raise as high as possible their standard of scholarship. The trustees are no doubt desirous of selecting a Professor, from whom they may also look for the exercise of a Christian influence over those who are afterwards to be the spiritual advisers as well as the religious instructors of their flocks; and I know not whether I possess this desideratum; but I know that I have a profound sense of its value, and that, if I were elected, it would ever be at least my aim and effort to send forth the young men to their holy work, not only with studious habits, and well-informed minds, but with hearts burning with love to Christ, and with love for souls. In my own prosecution of that work, I have endeavoured to exemplify my views of ministerial duty, although I admit that both in private study and in pastoral activity, I have fallen far short of my ideal of what a minister ought to be.

I confess that the summit of my ambition, as regards a position in the world, or rather in the church, has long been to be chosen some day to a Theological Professorship in Queen's College; and with an eye to this object, I have been for several years preparing myself for such an office. Nor do I affect to deny that should I fail in obtaining the Chair which is now vacant, I should feel acutely the disappointment, on this occasion, of my cherished wish and hope. But I trust it is not to my own interest or comfort I chiefly look. I am as anxious as any one in the Province can be for the true prosperity of the College—my own alma mater—and for the real good of the Church, in which I was baptized, and educated, and to whose advancement I have consecrated my life. I leave the matter, therefore, in the hands of the Board, with the sincere prayer, that their choice may fall on the individual—whether myself or another—who will be most instrumental in training up our Divinity Students to be scholarly, earnest, and faithful ministers of our beloved Church.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed.) J. B. MOWAT.

Testimonials
for
Professorship
in Queens College
Hebrew, Church History
&
Biblical Criticism

Rev. J. Mowat
elected Aug^r 5th 1867.
16 Trustees pres^t

Rev. Dr. Barclay pro
the Rev. F. Nichol - but
motⁿ was not seconded
Dr. Cook did not vote.
He expressed a high
opinion of Mr. Mowat
as a Minister -

The Rev. - Burnaby
Hamilton
alone dissenting

TESTIMONIALS.

I.

From the Rev. P. C. CAMPBELL, D.D., Principal of the University, and King's College of Aberdeen, and formerly Professor of Classical Literature in Queen's College.

Understanding that the Rev. J. B. MOWAT, M.A., of Niagara, intends to offer himself as a candidate for the Chair of Church History Biblical Criticism, and Hebrew in Queen's College, I feel it to be alike a duty and a pleasure to express the high opinion I entertain of his qualifications for such an office.

Mr. MOWAT attended my classes during the three sessions in which I occupied the Chair of Classical Literature in Queen's College, having previously resided with me at Brockville and studied privately under me for half a year. I had thus the most ample opportunities of forming an opinion of his character and talents.

I never had a student,—never, indeed, knew a young man,—of whom, in every respect, I could speak with greater confidence, or in higher and more unqualified terms. His ardour and diligence in all his studies were such as, with abilities very inferior to his, would have led to high attainments; combined, as they were, in his case, with superior talents and a singularly well-balanced mind, they led to rapid progress and distinguished success.

Mr. MOWAT's great characteristics as a student were a remarkable moral and intellectual solidity and sterlingness; a conscientious dislike of everything superficial, plausible and showy; a rigorous self-discipline, and love of accuracy and truth. He advanced rapidly, however, but never without leaving clean and solid work behind him. At the same time, his exercises, both in prose and in verse, manifest a great talent in turning his knowledge to account. They were marked by a fertility of ideas, a correctness of thought, a command of language, and a maturity of taste, not commonly found in young men.

I saw Mr. MOWAT, and heard much of him, when he was a student of divinity in the University of Edinburgh; and I know that he maintained there the same high character as at Queen's College.

I was not surprised to learn that he had selected the study of the original text of the Old and New Testaments as his favourite employment. It is a study for which he possesses a very peculiar aptitude, from the accuracy and extent of his early studies in the languages, and his singular love and power of discriminating truth from error,—a quality, the importance of which cannot possibly be overrated, in any one whose province it is, in these days, to interpret to Theological Students the Record of Revelation. His field of study in this department has, I have reason to believe, been much more thoroughly cultivated than is at all common, even among our most studious ministers; and I cannot but think that, in Hebrew and Biblical Criticism, it will be difficult to find one better qualified than he is, to conduct the studies of Candidates for the University.

Should the choice of the Trustees fall upon him, both they and the students will have the inexpressible comfort of knowing that nothing will be delivered, from the important Chair now vacant, but the ripe products of severe and conscientious investigation, elaborated by a sound judgment, under a deep sense of responsibility.

Of Mr. MOWAT's character as a man and a minister, I need say nothing;—they are well known to the Trustees, and render it certain that it will be his aim that the students committed to his care shall be characterized by that piety, that diligence, those ~~solid~~ attainments, and that constant direction of their thoughts and studies to the great work of the sacred office, by which, when a student, he was himself so remarkably distinguished.

ABERDEEN, 19th March, 1857.

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II.

From the Rev. THOMAS LIDDELL, D.D., formerly Principal of Queen's College, and Professor of Hebrew, Biblical Criticism, and Church History, &c., there.

LOCHMABEN, March 28, 1857.

Most willingly do I testify — because I can do so most conscientiously — how laboriously and successfully you devoted yourself, while a student at Queen's College, to the acquisition of the various branches of learning to which your attention was turned ; and having had occasion to hear those Professors in Edinburgh under whom you continued to study, express their opinion regarding you as a student, I can also testify that the same assiduity and success which characterized you in Canada, continued to distinguish you in Scotland.

The Chair now vacant in Queen's College, requires, I perceive, to be filled by one acquainted with Hebrew, Biblical Criticism, and Church History.

According to my view, eminent success in teaching must depend not so much on the precise amount of information possessed by the teacher, as on his natural and cultivated power of imparting to his student the knowledge he himself may have acquired.

Hebrew and Biblical Criticism, are, no doubt, of a kindred character — a somewhat minute and critical knowledge of the one, being indeed essential to the knowledge of the other ; — but even such a knowledge may be possessed, apart from a fitness in the instructor to convey either his acquisitions to his students, or the skill of making similar acquisitions for themselves.

With regard to Church History, I apprehend, that the talent for teaching it is disclosed, not only by lectures — merely containing information as to what has taken place, and when, in the history of the Church, (which may be collected by the perusal of books,) but by presenting an analysis of what may have occurred, and a statement of the combined causes which may have led to the varied occurrences which make that history, that it may be ascertained that their powers of discrimination are brought out, and trained for the special work to which in future life they may be called, as themselves instructors and guides of the people.

Of course I am not in a position to enable me to say, to what extent you may have cultivated the peculiar talents to which I have referred ; but I can safely and conscientiously say, as I hereby beg leave to do, that when I knew you as a student, you possessed that talent, and from what I know of your studious habits, I firmly believe that you have since cultivated it according to the extent to which your circumstances and duties permitted you to do so ; and for this reason, I believe that you would conduct the business of the vacant chair with no ordinary success.

But I am persuaded that it would add very greatly to the suitableness of the person appointed to the chair in question, if from experience he were acquainted with the habitudes of mind of the Canadian youth who might be expected to attend that class, and who should afterwards be required to take part in inculcating Divine Truth on the minds of the people of Canada.

As you have been brought up in Canada ; as you have yourself studied in it ; and so, as well as for several years since have been made acquainted with all sorts of minds in the country, I deem that you are in possession of a requisite for the situation which only few have been in circumstances to attain.

III.

From the Rev. GEORGE ROMAINE, M.A., formerly Professor of Classical Literature in Queen's College.

RICHMOND, Surrey, March 23rd 1857.

I am very happy to learn that you have resolved to become a candidate for the Chair of Hebrew, Biblical Criticism, and Church History in Queen's College, because I am sure that your election to that office would greatly tend to the advancement of the interests both of the College and of the Church in Canada.

During my residence in Kingston I had ample opportunities of forming an estimate of your talents and attainments and of your moral and religious character; and in all these respects there was no one who stood higher, either in my own estimation, or in that of the community, and especially of those who were most intimately acquainted with you.

From the constant and diligent attention, which during the years you have been at Niagara, you have devoted to the study of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, I feel confident that your previous attainments have been greatly increased, while your studious tastes and habits, added to your high sense of duty, are an assurance that, if appointed to the chair you will continue to advance in every requirement necessary for the improvement of your students.

Considering the purposes for which the University was chiefly designed, it is certain that the inculcation upon the minds of the students, of pure Evangelical Truth, the exercise of Christian influence on them, and on the country at large, and the exhibition of firm principle combined with amiability of temper, are as important requisites in the character of a professor as scholarship itself; and if these are important requisites in all the professors, they must be still more essential in one who is to unfold, as far as possible, the exact and full meaning of the very words of Divine Inspiration, and to show the bearings and connections of the great events in the history of the Church.

Your being a comparatively young man, may, in the opinion of some, be an objection to your appointment. But I have always been of opinion that it is much better to select for public offices, men in the vigour of life, whose powers may be expected to improve, instead of deteriorating. I have known professors who seemed to regard their chairs merely as a kind of honourable resting place, and who by no means fulfilled the expectations which their former fame had raised.

Rev. J. Edwards
Keapawa